

what's happening in Russia? Cut it as much as you want to?

The President. Well, I think we're going to have hearings about it. We're going to have to see. We'll have to cut it some. We can't meet the deficit reduction targets if we don't.

What's happening in Russia may or may not present an additional threat to our security, but what we hope we can do is to keep democracy and economic reform going. And I think there's an almost unanimous feeling in the Congress that we ought to do that. We're bipartisan, and that's one of the issues I want to discuss here today.

Q. Senator Dole said last night that instead of choosing Al Gore to reinvent Government, you should have chosen Ross Perot. What do you think of that?

The Vice President. I can't believe he'd say that. [Laughter]

The President. If I said what I thought, it would be a story. I don't want to do that. [Laughter]

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:47 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks With President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti and an Exchange With Reporters *March 16, 1993*

President Clinton. I'd like to make a brief statement and then invite President Aristide to make a statement. And then we'll answer questions.

It's been a great honor for all of us to have President Aristide and members of his government and the Ambassador from Haiti to the United States here in the Oval Office today. And we wanted to have the opportunity to speak to the American people and to the people of Haiti from the Oval Office to emphasize how important it is to me personally and to the United States to restore democracy in Haiti and to restore President Aristide as the elected leader of that country.

To those who have blocked the restoration of democracy, I want to make it clear in the strongest possible terms that we will not now

or ever support the continuation of an illegal government in Haiti and that we want to step up dramatically the pace of negotiations to restore President Aristide under conditions of national reconciliation and mutual respect for human rights with a program of genuine economic progress.

The Secretary of State has named an experienced diplomat, Mr. Lawrence Pezzullo, who is here now, to be his special representative in Haiti, to work with the Caputo mission through the United Nations and the Organization of American States to push forward with a rapid settlement of these issues. I would urge the de facto government of Haiti and the military officials in that country and police officials to support this process. Any opposition, any delay will only result in stronger measures taken by the United States and more difficulty and hardship for the people of Haiti, who have been the innocent sufferers in this whole sad saga.

I look forward to working with President Aristide. I look forward to the success of Mr. Pezzullo. And I want to make it clear that the United States is committed strongly to a much more aggressive effort to restore Mr. Aristide to his Presidency and to, over the long run, work with the people of Haiti to restore conditions of economic prosperity.

I am prepared to commit the United States to its fair portion of a 5-year, multinational \$1 billion effort to rebuild the Haitian economy. And we are going to begin on this project in earnest now.

I'd like to now invite President Aristide to make whatever remarks he would like to make, and then open the floor for your questions.

President Aristide. Mr. President Clinton, we are delighted to be here with you, with the Vice President, Secretary of State, Ambassador Pezzullo. We want to thank you on behalf of the Haitian people for your support. We want to thank you for what you just said. That went directly to the heart of the Haitian people working peacefully for the restoration of democracy.

I grasp this opportunity to thank the American people for their solidarity, because with

our American brothers and sisters, since 18 months we realize how beautiful it is to work in a nonviolent way for the restoration of democracy. The Haitian people today hear your voice, and on behalf of them, I can say, in the past we wanted to be with you; we are with you; in the future, we will be with you, and you will be welcome in Haiti when I will be there after the restoration of democracy.

We have a lot of people suffering since 18 months. And today I'm sure they are happy because they realize finally that day for the restoration of democracy will come, and since today they can continue to build but in a strongest way that democracy, always in a nonviolent way. The refugees can feel happy. Those who are in Guantanamo can feel happy. Those who are in Haiti working peacefully for that democracy can feel happy because that day is coming because of you, because of the American Government, because of the U.S., because of the OAS.

Thanks once again for that, and you are welcome to our land.

Q. Mr. President, in the past few days, President Aristide has called for a date certain for his return. He's called for tougher sanctions, a tougher enforcement of the embargo, a naval blockade, and for some action to relieve the suffering of those in Guantanamo. Are you prepared to take any of those steps?

President Clinton. Let me respond, if I might, to each in turn. And let me start with the middle suggestion, the question of whether the United States would take tougher action on the embargo. I wouldn't rule that out, but I think you shouldn't underestimate the impact of this diplomatic initiative, sending Mr. Pezzullo to Haiti, making the statements we're making today, sending the clear and unambiguous signal we're sending.

And I might note that just a few moments ago the person we had approved for refugee status who had been held illegally by the Haitian de facto Government was released to come to the United States as a refugee.

I think that the message we're sending out there is clear. So I think what we would like to do is to give Mr. Pezzullo a chance to go to Haiti, communicate strongly and directly to the appropriate people there what our po-

sition is and where we're going before we take actions, which at least in the short run will make life even more difficult for the Haitians. I wouldn't rule them out, but I think we ought to have it in an appropriate sequence of events.

As to the question of a date certain, I certainly think that we ought to return President Aristide in the near future. But I think that the date for the conclusion of the negotiations ought to come out of Mr. Caputo and his mission. And I think we ought to, in fairness, let him do that. It is a very grave thing for the United States alone to be setting a date certain in an endeavor that involves the United Nations and the Organization of the American States. So I think a date may well come out of the efforts of the Caputo mission, but we don't feel at this time it is the wisest thing for the long-term interests of President Aristide or Haiti for us to set the date on our own.

With regard to the refugees in Guantanamo, I'm going to do the following things: First of all, I'm going to send someone from our White House staff to Guantanamo to review the situation personally. Secondly, I'm going to take up the legal and human conditions of the refugees with the Attorney General, who has jurisdiction in these areas, now that we have a new Attorney General confirmed. I wanted to wait and have the opportunity to discuss that with her.

And then we will review the whole question and see whether or not there's anything else we should do. I expect all this would be done in the near future. I don't expect to take a good deal of time on this.

Q. President Aristide, is that satisfactory to you?

President Aristide. Totally.

Q. Can we expect or can any Haitian in Cap Haitien or elsewhere expect the early return, constitutional return of the constitutional President of Haiti?

President Aristide. Every Haitian should be extremely happy about what has happened today. I think that all Haitians can look with joy at the cooperation of myself and President Clinton, working hand in hand for all Haitians, looking forward to peace, to non-violence, to economic development. I think

everyone can feel great contentment and happy anticipation.

Q. Is there going to be a real celebration of the Constitution, the anniversary of the Constitution of Haiti?

President Aristide. Yes, with the help of President Clinton, all Haitians can feel comfortable and happy about celebrating March 29th as an anniversary for peace and respect of the law, the Constitution as a basis for the law, and for its respect for all Haitians.

Q. Mr. Clinton, would it be acceptable to you if the coup leaders left without being punished?

President Clinton. Well, it would be acceptable to me to restore President Aristide to power in Haiti under conditions which were safe for him and for all Haitians. He has spoken in the past about what his policies would be in that regard, and I presume that a lot of the details of this would be the subject of negotiations. And those are negotiations of which I do not believe I should engage, although I would say that I was very impressed with what President Aristide said today about the need for national reconciliation. And perhaps you'd want him to make a comment.

Q. Mr. President, you criticized——

President Clinton. Could we give him a chance to answer, please.

President Aristide. In Haiti we don't have an institution giving justice to people but unfortunately selling that justice. After 200 years, we realize we still have an army of 7,000 military and 40 percent of the national budget. So I used to ask the Haitians, do not go to any kind of violence or retaliation or vengeance. I will continue to do the same, because what we need is nonviolent reality, not violent.

That's why I'm not saying we want to see the coup leaders in jail and then to feel happy because we punished them. I'm saying, asking to all the Haitians to not go to vengeance, to wait for justice instead of doing justice for themselves out of institution. We can work peacefully to remove the coup leaders from the army and that way to free the army and let justice be done; not then to feel happy because we put them in jail, no; happy because we can that way make a balance in

a country where we don't have yet institutions who give justice.

I would add this point: We want reconciliation. We want justice. We want peace. That's why through this process, by a dialog, we can reach that level where, finally, the Haitians will feel so happy to not go to vengeance and to not see the symbol of the coup in the same place, with the same weapons, doing the same repression. That's the way we are trying to go.

[At this point, President Aristide repeated his answer in French, and it was translated as follows.]

President Aristide. There is no institution in Haiti which is in a position or able to give justice in Haiti at the present time. Justice is sold, and that has been the case for the last 200 years. We in Haiti are opting now for nonviolence, for peace for all the people of Haiti. Therefore, we must free the army from those who were responsible for the coup, asking at the same time all Haitians not to engage in vengeance, but rather to devote themselves to justice and to feel happy in the knowledge that justice will be done.

It is in that sense that we have asked for the departure of the coup leaders, that they no longer be the heads of the army, not necessarily that they either be in jail or have to leave the country, but that a solution be found via dialog which will lead to a truly balanced situation so that all can work together in this nonviolent context which will bring about a feeling of deepest joy in the hearts of all Haitians.

Q. Thank you.

President Clinton. I know we have to go. Let me just reaffirm two points, and I'm glad you said it the second time because that's exactly what came out of our meetings. That sort of attitude on the part of President Aristide is the very thing that should enable us to resolve this in a peaceful way. If the people of Haiti can live in peace and security, subsequent to an agreement, and begin once again to work for their own prosperity instead of living in ever-deepening misery, then I think that we will be well on the road to alleviating literally centuries of oppression in

that beautiful country that has been so misgoverned for so long.

And I applaud his statement. It is in that spirit that I undertake this initiative. And I want to close by reaffirming the determination of the United States to restore democracy and President Aristide as soon as possible.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With the Hispanic Caucus

March 16, 1993

Q. Mr. President, what are you doing in this meeting tonight, or this afternoon? Some special—

The President. Well, we're going to talk about a lot of things of interest to the caucus, and I'm going to listen. We're going to talk about the economic program, and they're going to talk about some things that they're interested in in the administration. And they can talk about it when the meeting is over. I'm listening today.

Surgeon General

Q. Mr. President, could you tell us why Dr. Novello is being asked to step down as Surgeon General before her term expires?

The President. I don't know what arrangements—she's going to continue in the Department of Health and Human Services, and I have a very high regard for her. And I told Donna Shalala when I appointed her Secretary of HHS that I had a very strong feeling about wanting my health department director from home to be the Surgeon General, but that I very strongly approved of the record Dr. Novello has made and I hoped that we could persuade her to stay on. And this is an arrangement they all worked out. I don't know the details and the timing. I can't comment on it. I just don't know anything about that.

NOTE: The exchange began at 5:51 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at the American Ireland Fund Dinner

March 16, 1993

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for once again participating in the great American charade designed to convince people that the President has more authority than the Speaker of the House. Now, if I were a prime minister, I wouldn't have to worry about that. *[Laughter]* Mr. Prime Minister, it's a delight to welcome you to our Nation's Capital, and I look forward to our visit tomorrow. I want to congratulate Chairman O'Reilly. Let me ask you: Do you like the purple? *[Laughter]* I want you to understand that is not royal purple. That is a substitute, because he made the ultimate sacrifice; he gave his President the green.

I want to thank all those who worked so hard to make this dinner successful. It's often remarked that on St. Patrick's Day we're all Irish, or we wish we were. I am actually part Irish, and I have often been accused of having a certain gift for blarney—*[laughter]*—although those were not the words used last year when that was said. I'm glad to see Senator Kennedy and Congressman Kennedy and Mrs. Smith in the audience. But, you know, President Kennedy was the first Irish Catholic to become President. But though a Baptist from Arkansas, I'm the first graduate of a Catholic university to become President. I'm glad to see Father O'Donovan out there, my president, of Georgetown. Thank you.

As a younger man, I went through a period of intense uncertainty about whether I should pursue a career in music or a career in politics. I was happy to learn that the Prime Minister, whom you affectionately called the Taoiseach—you know, I want the Members of the Congress to learn that. I like that, the chieftain. It has a good feeling. *[Laughter]* He's been an exponent of one of